TRANSCRIPT—CONNIE BOSTIC

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TE: Since you were not born and raised in Fairview we'll skip over some of those questions and move on to my first question. Why and when did you come to Fairview?

CB: We came to Fairview, my husband had been working for a company in Charlotte and he decided with some partners he was going to start a new business in Asheville. So, um, we had five children and several dogs and we came up here and I promised that I wouldn't look for a house for at least two years. Well, needless to say, I couldn't stand it, so I started looking for a house. And I kept getting lost because, you know, it was so confusing here. I mean I was used to grids in Charlotte. You know, I could get from one end of the town to the other just like that but here I couldn't do that. It was really confusing and I was afraid to go to the grocery store because I was afraid I couldn't find my children again. But I finally got lost in Fairview one day. And I came around that curve, just past Brush Creek and I saw my house sitting on the side of the road out there and I knew without going any further that was my house. I knew it was. It was for sale. I didn't know it then, but it had been on the market for a very, very, very long time. And people would come and look and run away because (Laughter) it needed

work. (Laughter.) It needed “a little work.” We replaced fifty-two panes of broken glass. It was the dead of winter and people were living in there. (Oh my!) The only pipes connected were the kitchen sink and the toilet. Everything else was just laying broken under the floor. There were holes in all the walls, there were holes in the floors, there were holes in the ceiling, leaks in the roof: it was pretty much a wreck. But I didn’t see any of that. (Laughter.) I just saw the gingerbread. And my husband was working twenty hours a day and the next thing he knew he owned that horrible house and he threatened to burn it to the ground every day we lived in it. And still, there’s always something, you know.

TE: Did you have children then?

CB: I had five.

TE: But you didn’t move into the house with it like that surely.

CB: We started working on the house immediately. Actually, we started working on it before we signed the papers which was stupid because we went to the closing and they’d cut off an acre of land that was supposed to go with it. (Oh dear.) But by that time, I’d started working on it and it was too late to do anything about that. But we had five children and Catherine was like, had her six-weeks checkup in Asheville so she was a tiny, tiny baby. But we did a lot of it. We converted the furnace from--I think it was coal--we converted that to oil which you could just watch the level of the tank go down when the thing was, I mean it was amazing, just amazing. So, the first winter we lived in the house one of the kids went to bed one night without unplugging the bathtub and the next morning we had a six-inch ice cube in that bathtub. It was that cold in that house. My kids are tough, but you know--. (Laughter.)

TE: Do you still live in that house?

CB: Oh absolutely. And I got a new business in that house. I live in, basically, three little rooms and the rest of it's empty but I won't leave it. I don't know why, I just won't leave, so--

TE: Well, you found where you were supposed to be.

CB: I guess I did. I guess I did.

TE: That means a lot.

CB: We had a big tree fall on it last year. ( ) take off the front porch and come through the wall, a big limb like this--

TE: Do you--

CB: I still won't leave. I won't cut down the tree so--

TE: Do you know who built the house?

CB: The house was built by one of the Ashworths. I can't remember which one but I've heard all sorts of stories about how the house came to be built. And one story I'd heard was that there was a doctor named Ashworth in town and he's the one that-- There's one story about him having to leave town because he dug up bodies and sold them to--

JR: Oh, that sounds pretty far-fetched.

CB: Yeah, well, I don't know, but anyhow he did leave town and the other story is that he left because nobody had any money to pay him here. And so he left and all these people owed him money and he left those debts to his brother and his brother let people pay off

their debts by bringing materials and working on the house. So that's how the house came to be built, or at least that's the story I was told.

TE: What's the style? You mentioned gingerbread.

CB: It's Queen Anne

TE: OK. Wow. Do you know how old it is, roughly?

CB: I think it was built around 1894 or somewhere around there. 1894, 1898.

JR: And it's on Cane Creek?

CB: No, it's on seventy-four.

TE: On seventy-four. Really. Where?

CB: Just past Brush Creek turn off. You go around that deep curve and it's on the right. It's yellow.

JR: I know that house.

TE: I've seen it.

JR: Yeah, it's a historic little piece of….

TE: By any chance do you have the original plans for the house?

CB: No. I don't have any of that.

TE: And what about photographs?

CB: No. Sorry.

TE: All right, that's ok. That's all right.

CB: Shelby Davis might have early photographs of it. Her family lived in the house. I bought it from her father whose name was Orville McAbee.

JR: Hope the price was right.

CB: Oh, the price was good. Yeah. (Laughter.)

JR: That's like a historic building in Fairview.

TE: I would think so.

CB: It's on the register. I did that, so--

TE: We'll have to look into that and see if we can turn up some photos.

CB: It would be great if you could. I'd love to see them.

TE: You mentioned that, um, you lost an acre because you started working on the land before you'd even closed. How much land is there and has any of it been farmed?

CB: The house was originally a part of a very large dairy farm. Called the Ashworth Dairies, I think. But I don't know any of the history about the farm. I know that once in a while, you know, somebody will find a milk bottle out in the yard.

TE: Did you all, I mean, did you plant crops of any kind?

CB: I had a small garden of mostly flowers. But since I was stung by a bee and can't go outdoors anymore, I no longer have a garden.

TE: Oh, that's not good. That's not good.

TE: What were your early, I guess, say, additional memories of moving to Fairview and what you thought about it.

CB: Well, when I was a kid growing up in Spindale, which was a dismal place, once a year my grandparents would put my sister and me in the car and drive us up to the mountains. And we came up seventy-four and I always thought it was the most beautiful place I've ever seen. I still feel that way about it. So, I was really excited to be here and to be, I mean, when I was about fourteen or fifteen years old, I found *Look Homeward, Angel* at the library. And after that, any time a boy was dumb enough to ask me for a date. (Laughter.) He had to drive to Asheville and be dragged through this beat up old house. But anyway, I just couldn't believe how lucky I was to live in this place. Fairview was real different then. Guy Merrell's store was my favorite place in Fairview. Guy Merrell reminded me a lot of my grandfather. He was a staunch, serious Democrat and, uh, things in the store weren't always pristine or fresh. (Laughter.) But Guy Merrell was. (Laughter.) So, I loved Guy Merrell and I loved that store. When I started to meet some of the neighbors and some of the natives, the first question they asked me was, "Which one of the Baptist churches are you going to?" And when I said, "I'm Episcopalian, that was it." My children were actually, you know, they were ostracized at the elementary school because they didn't go to the Baptist churches. So, it was pretty, you know, that was pretty grim. But we found other things to do and it was all fine. The family that was extremely welcoming was the McClure Clarkes and they were very welcoming.

JR: They're very generous.

CB: Yeah, so that was great.

TE: How would you compare what you'd just described about Fairview then and where and what it is now?

CB: Oh, my goodness, it's so different now. So different.

TE: How so?

CB: Well, there are people here now who have come from all sorts of other places. I mean, there was certainly no library in Fairview then. But, there have always been interesting people. Years ago Dick Moores and his wife Gretchen lived in Fairview and he drew the Gasoline Alley comic strip. (Oh, ok, good.) And Gretchen had been a concert pianist and they lived over on, I can't remember which road it is now. Maybe Old Fort or just off Old Fort Road. But there have always been some interesting people around here, always. And, so, I think now there are lots more interesting people around here.

TE: And do you think that that's a widespread opinion of what Fairview is today?

CB: I have no idea. (Okay.) I don't talk to that many people. (Okay.) You know, I have some really good friends here now but most of them are people who've come from other places. (All right.)

TE: In your earlier days of living in Fairview did you feel like it was a safe place to live?

CB: Oh yes. I've lived in my house for 45 and I've never had a key. (Really!) If I'm gone for three weeks the house is always open. So, I've never had a key to my house. I still feel very safe there.

TE: Well, that was my next question: if you locked your doors. (Laughter.)

JR: Did your children go to school in Fairview?

CB: Yeah, they all went to Fairview Elementary School and they started at Reynolds High School but I was not happy with that school so they ended up going to the Newfound School. The older ones did.

JR: Where is the Newfound School?

CB: It was gone by the time my youngest daughter was old enough for high school. Newfound was a school on, oh God, what was the name of that street? I can see it but I can't say it. I was in an old YWCA building right downtown.

JR: Asheville

CB: Yeah, and it was a wonderful, wonderful school. A wonderful school.

JR: A private school.

CB: Yeah, it was a great school.

JR: So, they didn't have to put up with that "Far-view" and all the other snobbery--

CB: They didn't have to put up with that awful principal.

JR: Children here had a hard time as I understand it.

CB: Oh, he was a terrible man.

JR: Well, I don't know.

TE: What were your children's experiences at Fairview Elementary?

CB: There were some teachers there who were great, um, the one I remember loving the most was Mrs. Bunn whose husband owned an antique store downtown.

TE: Oh yes, the Bunns! She was a teacher?

CB: Oh. she was a wonderful teacher!

TE: I didn't know that.

CB: He was a grouchy, horrible old man. (Laughter.) Oh. she was so kind, and so generous, and so good. I mean, all the kids in her class, every year, they all had shoes and they all had coats. Cause back then, a lot of the kids out here had nothing. And so, the

children in her class had what they had to have. She just saw to it. She was really a generous and wonderful woman.

TE: High praise, high praise. I bet your children liked it. Did they like it overall do you think?

CB: They got along, I mean, the boys had friends who-- My boys were very adventurous. They were really-- They used to skateboard down the squiggly part of the mountain. Up there by, you know. They scared me to death all the time. And a lot of the time they were going by bike. I worked, I had to. And so, uh, what year was it we had that big flood?

TE: Seventy-three?

CB: Yeah, well, ok. Michael and Mark had a rubber raft. (Laughter.) And they--. I was at work and they blew up the rubber raft and went down Cane Creek, flippin' snakes out of the raft with a stick, you know. They were always really, really busy. So they, they were fine--

TE: You mentioned a little bit ago about some ostracization based on which church you attended.

CB: Yeah.

TE: Do you think any of that carried over at school?

CB: It probably did. I, you know, with five kids and a full time, very demanding job I didn't spend a lot of time at the school. I spent some time there and I'm sure some of it carried over. You know, it's just how things were. And there were other kids there in the school who didn't go to church and so that was sort of how things worked out. It was hard.

TE: What was the racial background in Fairview when you moved here?

CB: There were no black people, period. There were none. I think when Catherine was in elementary school there was one young man who was black. But that was it. That was it. There was no racial anything. There certainly weren't any Hispanic people then.

TE: Do you think that's changed now? Is there--

CB: I think it's changed some. It hasn't changed a lot. It's changed some, I mean I think there are definitely some Hispanics here. I mean working on the farms and that kind of thing so--

TE: When you moved to Fairview who were considered the leaders of the community that didn't necessarily hold a public office, but--

CB: Guy Merrell, at Guy Merrell's Store

TE: Were there any other individuals?

CB: Well, the Ramseys were always very active and, of course, the McClure-Clarkes. So as far as leadership was concerned, that's about what I knew about it.

TE: Ok. What about what my family always referred to in their small community as the characters of the community that either had the stories to tell or odd behaviors? Were there any individuals like that that you recall in the earlier days of Fairview living here?

CB: Oh gosh. There were always a few people who were sort of peripheral to what went on here who didn't seem to have much of a place in the community. Uh, I can't remember names right now.

TE: That's ok.

CB: There was a welder who had a welding shop on seventy-four where my studio is now and a lot of the kids hung out down there. I think he probably gave my boys their first beers. (Laughter.) He did seem to drink quite a lot. Cause in that stream behind the thing, every time it rains there's a dam made of liquor bottles. Literally. (Laughter.) Uh, and then there was Mrs. Dotson and Mrs. Dotson was the most amazing human being in the world. She was the only woman I ever really knew well.

TE: Do you not recall her first name?

CB: Ruth, I believe. (Okay.) She owned the Fairview Tavern. Which is in that little white building across from where you go up. (Okay.) It was, uh, it was an amazing place. I didn't spend any time in the place but my boys went there after school and hung out and talked to her a lot. They loved Mrs. Dotson. And she was, without a doubt, the smartest woman. I mean, all the people, all the men from Fairview who were, like, working-type men who drank, went there in the evenings. There was never any kind of a problem. EVER. She was very tall, thin and erect, wore her hair in a bun at the back of her neck. A very dignified woman. And she kept that place, just, I mean it was perfect, it was perfect. So, she was just an enigma. She was amazing; she was just an amazing human being. She had two adopted children. And she was someone I really respected.

TE: That sounds interesting.

CB: She was great. She was just great.

TE: Do you know how long she might have had that bar?

CB: A long time. And then after she-- She finally sold it to a man who didn't do nearly as well with it as she had. He couldn't keep things under control the way she had so--

TE: Sometimes it just takes the strong hand of a woman to get it done.

CB: She was amazing.

TE: What about the early years when you moved here? Was there any place you wanted to go out to eat? Was there any place in Fairview you could do that?

CB: You pretty much had to go into town. (Okay.) You had to go into town. Uh--

TE: Where might you have gone in town?

CB: Well, with the kids we went to the Paradise Restaurant, which was on Broadway. (Laughter.) And the woman there knew every child's name, they knew what they would want to eat. I mean, it was the greatest place.

JR: That was our one and only ethnic restaurant.

CB: That's right. It was, it really was. (Laughter--Chinese!) Well, sort of Chinese. All the people there were wonderful. They were really nice and the kids loved going there. But that was, you know, for a long time you just, you know, you didn't very often go out to eat. Now there was a private club at the top of the BB&T Building. And they had decent food. (The City Club.) Yeah, the City Club, exactly. And there was a little café on Wall Street: High Tea. So--

JR: Oh, High Tea, fabulous. I still use their cookbook.

CB: Oh, I still have it too. (Laughter.)

JR: I use it. (Laughter.)

TE: I keep hoping someone will open a tea shop in Fairview that--

CB: I want someone to open a seafood restaurant in Fairview.

TE: Well, I'm allergic to seafood so--

CB: Oh, I'm sorry. (Laughter.) So sad. That's worse than my being allergic to bees. (Laughter.)

TE: Um, how did, um, your children get to school?

CB: We mostly took them to school. Sometimes they rode the bus. They almost always rode the bus home because I was working and George was working.

TE: Oh, they had a bus from Newfound School? Or--

CB: Oh no--

JR: You just mean the elementary school.

CB: Newfound, they generally rode with John Ager who was teaching there at the time. (Okay.)

JR: But this was for, uh, the bus was elementary.

CB: The elementary school, yeah, yeah. And John still tells the story about the time he was taking the pig to market the same time he was going to school. (Laughter.) So, he had four kids in this little Bronco with the pig and they ate Ticker's lunch. (Laughter.)

TE: Oh, that is so funny! (More laughter.) You might have told me and I forgot, but what was the year you moved here?

CB: Nineteen-seventy

TE: Nineteen-seventy. Ok, that was little after the decade of Vietnam and things that happened then, but I'm wondering what was the political atmosphere or the atmosphere of returning vets? Did you see any of that in Fairview?

CB: I had no experience with that.

TE: Ok, and, uh, you're not the only one. A lot of people have indicated that they didn't really see the type of turmoil that took place in other parts of the country. So that's pretty..-- What about earlier years of living here? Were there many crimes that you were aware of, that were reported?

CB: Nothing I can think of. I'm sure there must have been little things, but I certainly don't remember anything major.

TE: Ok. You mentioned the flood earlier and we were told it was 1973 and I think even 1972 there might have been one as well. So, you were here when that took place. Did your house have any damage?

CB: No, I'm up on a hill.

TE: Did you know anyone who did experience loss or damage?

CB: No, my boys were lucky. They did not get lost or damaged. (Laughter.) So--

TE: (Laughter.) They were out patrolling and taking care of things. Well, tell us about the art world here. In Fairview and I guess Asheville, I have to bring that in too. How did you decide to set up a studio?

CB: Well, it was always something I was interested in. Oh God, this is such a long and ridiculous story. It's something I wanted to do, always. Always, my whole life. And I was always told that artists were men, and they were very special men, and I could forget it. And so, after we had been here, maybe four or five years, I saw some drawings that had been made by the department head over at UNCA and I thought, "Oh, I would SO like to be able to do that." So, I said, "I'm going to sign up for a drawing class." By this time my

youngest child was seven. So, I signed up for that class thinking I'd go ahead and take this one class. I was terrified thinking that I was going to be in this class with a bunch of eighteen year-olds who were going to know SO much more than I knew. And I got over there and the whole department was bored doctor's wives. That's who was enrolled there! (Laughter.) There were a few kids but it was mostly bored doctor's wives. And so, I took that class and then I signed up for another class and I was the worst dilettante you ever saw. (Laughter.) I signed up for everything but weaving. I never tried that. But I was terrible. If I was taking a painting class and it was going pretty well, halfway through I'd quit because I knew I couldn't do that. And so, I was over there for I don't know how many years just putzing about and not working toward a degree or anything. I mean, I'd had two years of college but at a place where they didn't have an art department. And so, I finally left UNCA because I thought, "This is ridiculous." And after some counseling, my husband agreed that I could have a studio downtown. So, I had a studio downtown and I was alone. I mean, at that point, the only women painters here painted landscapes with lavender snow and little bowls of flowers and fruit and that was it. There was one other painter who was a serious painter but she had gone off with some man and was worthless for several years. (Laughter.) And so, I had nobody to talk to. I had absolutely nobody to talk to. And I was so desperate that I was paying a young male artist, who had moved here from somewhere else, to come to my studio once a week to talk to me about what I was doing. I was that desperate. And then one day I happened to be around when he was talking to another man about his work and I saw how different it was and I thought, well, he wants the money but that's it, you know, so I was alone again. Eventually one day -- at that point the Asheville Citizen, which was never a great

newspaper but was better then than it is now, God knows -- they had a weekly art column. Every Sunday there would be an art column and the person who was writing it was the department head from out at Western who had come here from up north and he had mentioned my work several times in the newspaper. He never said anything good about it, but he didn't say anything bad. And so out of the blue I just picked up the phone and called his house one day. His wife brought him to the phone and we chatted for a little bit and he asked, "Where's your studio?" and I told him. He came down and stayed about two hours, I guess, and he said, "Well I do graduate critiques on this day at this time if you want to come up at least you'll have somebody to talk to." So, I started doing that and I had done it three or four times and he said one day, "Why don't you come into the graduate program?" And I said, "Well I can't do that. I don't have an undergraduate degree." And he, being a sensible person, said, "Maybe nobody will notice."

TE: God bless him!

CB: Well, they didn't notice for about five months. (Laughter.) And then they noticed so I had to finish both degrees. That's how the whole thing started and I got more and more entrenched and it was more and more important to me as time went on. It's just what I do now and I feel so fortunate to be able to do it. I feel so lucky to be able to do it and to be able to do it here.

TE: Do you know of any other artists in Fairview who are working and struggling to get to the point they want to be? Is there an art world in Fairview?

CB: There seems to be. I'm not much of a joiner. I'm a member of a little group called the Faux Book Club because we're all artists and we all read all the time but nobody can ever agree on the same book. We actually do exhibitions together every now and again.

(Okay.) I've got this little cluster of friends who happen not to live in Fairview. But I know that there's stuff that goes on here and I think there is a group now that meets monthly or something and they do like a two and a half day thing. So, I don't know that much about it. I do have several students who live in Fairview. A couple of them are making really great progress so I really enjoy them.

TE: That must be heartwarming for you.

CB: It's great! It's really great. I never thought I'd teach because I'm a lousy teacher. (Laughter.) I've got one young woman in her early thirties and everybody else is mature. So, it's been really satisfying to do that.

TE: Every artist, in my opinion, has his or her own style or directions or thoughts of when you're creating. What category or style would describe what you do?

CB: Well, I have a very short attention span. So, it varies from one minute to the next, sometimes, what I'm doing. I'm not interested in just making pretty pictures. I'm just not interested in that. I've got a show up right now about domestic abuse. I had one a year or so ago about the pipeline protest out in North Dakota. I did a large series about Calamity Jane. I got really interested in her because everything you read about her is diametrically opposed to the last thing you've read about her. And so, I was just really interested in how - - A lot of my work is about little girls and women. So that's the kind of think I'm interested in.

JR: Social issues. So, a lot of it is reactionary to what's going on. (Yeah.)

TE: And I feel from you the satisfaction that you get from your art by just listening to you describe it.

CB: It's what you do. That's all.

TE: That's pretty awesome. That's pretty awesome to someone that can only draw stick people.

CB: If you can write your name, you can draw. I promise you, if you can write your name, you can draw!

TE: I'll keep that in mind.

JR: Can I ask you a question?

TE: Sure!

JR: Weren't you involved with the Black Mountain College [Museum + Arts Center]?

CB: Oh, I'm still very involved.

JR: What is your role there?

CB: I was board chair for a number of years and now I'm just a board member. So, it's been fascinating. It's just been fascinating. And I've met some of the most amazing people.

JR: So, you're researching and developing the history--

CB: Yeah, so we're a history museum basically. But everything that happened there is tied to what's going on here, now. Our current exhibition [Materials, Sounds + Black Mountain College] is artists from Australia who work with sound in various ways. It's fascinating. It's so much fun to go see that because there is a big circle of bricks on the floor and hanging above it are all kinds of wind chimes. And going around that circle of bricks is a Roomba with a big, peaked hat on it and it's all chance whether or not it will

actually hit one of the wind chimes or not. (Laughter.) And it all goes back to John Cage and his idea about what is and isn't music.

JR: That's on display at Black Mountain now?

CB: No, it's not Black Mountain. We're downtown.

JR: On Broadway?

CB: No, we're not on Broadway anymore. We have a new space and it's on College Street. Do you know where that Korean restaurant is? Right next door.

TE: Judith, do you have any additional questions that we haven't touched on?

JR: Oh, I'm sure we could talk to Connie for hours. (Laughter.)

TE: Do you have any thoughts or comments about moving to Fairview or living in Fairview that we haven't touched on that you want to share?

JR: Or recollections about what happened here, what has happened here.

TE: Maybe what you think is going to happen here.

CB: Oh gosh, don't get me started on what I'm dreading is going to happen here. Um, I know, it's strange, 'cause most of the people that I've spent time with since I moved here to Fairview are people who've moved here from other places. And that's a good thing. On the other hand, what's happening on Highway Seventy-Four, I mean where the Ingles is there used to be a pasture with a big, fat spotted pony in it. On the corner of Cane Creek Road and Seventy-four there used to be a pasture with a big old Appaloosa in there. And, you know, you miss these things.

JR: Just recently there was a pasture down in front of Sales Greenhouse. (Exactly.) With cows in it. And now there is a gas station and there's gonna be apartments.

CB: It's sad, it's really sad to see that. (I know.) So...I miss that big old pony. (Laughter.)

JR: When we moved here, we took pictures all along the road. (Oh, did you?) Because we said, you know, it can't stay like this forever. And we took pictures all the way along the road so we could remember what it was like.

CB: Oh! I'm so glad you did that. That was so smart.

TE: That was smart to do.

JR: We've only been here fifteen years and look how much it's changed since then. It's really escalated.

CB: In nineteen-seventy you can't imagine how gorgeous it was.

JR: Oh, it was.

CB: Cane Creek Road was glorious.

TE: I've only lived here five years this July and I've seen a lot of changes in five years. But fell in love with the area when we finally found it.

JR: I couldn't believe we were still in the same state, it was so far out. When we drove out from Asheville back in the seventies, like you said, in the eighties.

CB: I know. Well, even in the eighties and nineties before they widened the road, you'd go under the parkway bridge in the summertime and the temperature would drop (finger snap) just like that. Ten degrees.

JR: That's right.

CB: There were wonderful poplar trees that shaded the road all the way to the top of the mountain. And you could see that little creek by the parkway bridge.

JR: Yes--that was beautiful.

CB: So, it's….there are things I miss.

TE: Thank you so much, Connie, for sharing your time and your thoughts and memories with us. It really means a lot.

END OF INTERVIEW.